

September 14, 2015

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RE: PDS2015-MUP-98-014W2, PDS2015-RP-15-001, LOG NO. PDS2015-ER-98-14-016B

I'm writing to offer my concerns regarding the scope and nature of the environmental impacts anticipated to be caused by the El Monte Valley San Mining Project. I ask that these concerns be thoroughly considered in the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement and for staff when they consider their position on this project that will have serious repercussions for a community and ecosystem.

I have serious concerns regarding the pollution and reduction of the aquifer within the El Monte Valley. In an area with so little water, we need to better protect our water sources, not destroy them. This project seeks to mine the dirt 90 feet below the current elevation, which will expose the surface of the San Diego River, thereby making this subterranean water source susceptible to the rapid rates of evaporation we witness here in East County. The loss of the sand will also destroy the natural filter the sand provides to help clean our water in this valley. There are also many animals that depend on the aquifer to provide moisture in this arid region.

The soil consistency of this valley is part of what makes this valley unique. Once the soil becomes less porous, certain plant species may no longer be able to make their home in the Valley. This shall also have a disastrous effect on the animals in the Valley. Once certain plant species disappear, other animals that relied on these plants for food or shelter, will also disappear, thereby causing ripple effect in the ecosystem. There have been numerous reports that demonstrate how even small changes on an ecosystem can have devastating effects. This project is proposing major changes, for over a decade, that will permanently impact the sensitive flora and fauna that call this Valley home.

An aquifer, by its very nature is underground and not easy to measure or monitor. If any company is granted the ability to mine the El Monte River Valley, they will indiscriminately make use of the water located in the valley, to wash their sand and spray down the dust kicked up by large trucks and earth movers. The sound and fumes created by the mining equipment and hauling trucks will also have negative effects on the sensitive animals that use these areas for nesting grounds and migration. These impacts will affect the whole Valley, not just on the areas proposed for sand mining. Additionally, the pollution and water level depletion to the nearby resident wells is another huge concern of water waste.

Other concerns include the watering of the Valley Fever spores, that have been identified in this Valley, that will be kicked up with the dust and distributed to the nearby residents, the employees of the sand

mining, the children who visit the pumpkin patch, the patrons of the nearby venues, the horseback riders, the trail users, El Capitan high school (situated at the end of the Valley), and the animals that are susceptible to these fungal spores.

A huge concern too is the ease at which the developer promises to only mine for a certain amount of time and then develop it into a nature preserve. Even if 15 years of mining in the Valley didn't have such a huge negative impact to the aquifer, flora, fauna and residents, the Community of Lakeside has NEVER had a developer stop sand mining once they've begun. It is just too lucrative and they can easily promise more and more to the municipalities and politicians with their proposed MUP renewals. This developer has already said there is over \$2 billion worth of sand and land in El Monte Valley, do you really think they will stop? Unbreakable restrictions need to be set in place, so that developers cannot continually renew these types of permits.

There are many other numerous concerns, but I urge you to refer to SANDAG's "San Diego Region Aggregate Supply Study", which eliminated El Monte Valley sand from consideration due to its proximity to residential. I'm confident the Environmental Report will demonstrate the negative impacts to be too great to mitigate and that this project, and others like it, should not be considered in the El Monte Valley.

This is not the only option for restoring this Valley to a native setting for animals, plants and people to enjoy. There are numerous grants and non-profits that are ready to purchase this land, at fair-market value, to do just that! Don't make the assumption that there is only one way to pay for the restoration as the developers have stated.

Sincerely,

Kristen C. Mitten
Vice-Chair of the Lakeside Community Planning Group
Member of the Lakeside River Park Conservancy
Mother of two small children
Resident of East County for 20+ years